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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 3017
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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, G/TIP, G-ACBLANK, AND SCA/RA

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [KTIP](#) [KWMN](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: TIP INTERIM ASSESSMENT

REF: A. STATE 109260
[B](#). TASHKENT 1156
[C](#). TASHKENT 1086
[D](#). TASHKENT 793
[E](#). TASHKENT 1256
[F](#). TASHKENT 900
[G](#). TASHKENT 987
[H](#). TASHKENT 787
[I](#). TASHKENT 1304
[J](#). TASHKENT 1225
[K](#). TASHKENT 1085
[L](#). TASHKENT 1227
[M](#). TASHKENT 769
[N](#). TASHKENT 964

Per request in ref A, below is post's submission for the interim TIP assessment:

[A](#). Reducing Child Labor

Uzbekistan did take steps to end child labor during the annual cotton harvest, although experts believe it will take several years to adequately address the problem (ref B). In September Uzbekistan adopted a multi-year national action plan on child labor to guide implementation efforts of International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions 182 and 138 (refs C and D). The Prime Minister also issued a strongly worded statement ordering regional governors not to use child labor in the fall cotton harvest, which was recommended by UNICEF as a positive first step. Field observations and an informal assessment by UNICEF indicated that early in the harvesting season there were fewer schoolchildren picking cotton this year; however, due to early rains and concerns over production quotas, schoolchildren were ultimately mobilized in several regions of the country. The age of children picking cotton and conditions varied widely by region - the vast majority of children were older than eleven, but children as young as nine were observed picking cotton in some areas (ref E).

[B](#). Implementation of the New Comprehensive TIP Law

Since adopting its first comprehensive anti-trafficking law in March, the Government of Uzbekistan has moved rapidly to follow through on its implementation. President Karimov issued a resolution on July 8 officially adopting an anti-TIP national action plan, which included the establishment of a National Inter-Agency Commission on Combating TIP comprised of high-ranking officials (ref F); the first of mandatory quarterly meetings convened on July 23 under the chairmanship of the Prosecutor-General. The national action plan also called for provincial level inter-agency committees to form (ref G), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed on September 29 that all twelve provinces plus Tashkent City have convened their initial meetings. The national action plan also tasked the Cabinet of Ministers with establishing new programs to protect and assist victims. Trafficking in persons-themed stories now appear on almost a daily basis in the state-controlled mass media and serve to raise awareness among potential victims and deter would-be traffickers (refs G and H).

1C. Support for Shelters

Uzbekistan has not yet provided financial or in-kind assistance to the two existing shelters for TIP victims (which are operated by IOM and supported with funds from USAID). However, the government announced plans to soon open a rehabilitation center for trafficking victims in Tashkent, which will be operated by the Labor Ministry and funded out of the state budget. The rehabilitation center will have 30

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beds and provide human trafficking victims with food and lodging, as well as any necessary medical, psychological, and legal assistance; help reestablish contact between victims and their relatives; and assist in victims' social rehabilitation. The center will be open to all trafficking victims - including Uzbek citizens, foreigners, and stateless individuals - who will be accommodated at the center for at least 30 days and longer if necessary (ref I). Officials also have discussed opening additional shelters for trafficking victims in Uzbekistan's provinces (ref J).

1D. Criminal Code Amendments

Consistent with promises made by the Government of Uzbekistan since the adoption of the comprehensive TIP law in March, President Karimov signed a law on September 16 bringing TIP-related criminal code amendments into force (ref K). The amendments appeared in a revised version of Article 135, which is now entitled "Trafficking in Persons." The amendments introduced clearer definitions and specifically criminalized trafficking offenses. The maximum penalties for convicted traffickers increased from five to 12 years in prison, particularly in cases involving repeat offenders, trafficking more than one person, using force or threat, group conspiracy, or abuse of official position. The minimum sentence is three years in jail, which eliminated the possibility of offenders merely paying fines. Since the adoption of the criminal code amendments several articles have appeared in the state-controlled press demonstrating that the new stiffer statutes are already being applied against convicted traffickers. For example - in a case that was reported in the Uzbek press and confirmed by an anti-trafficking NGO in Kazakhstan - a court in Tashkent in October convicted an Uzbek man and three female accomplices of trafficking women from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan and sentenced them each to between 10 to 14 years' imprisonment under the new criminal code amendments (ref L).

Other Significant Developments

In June Uzbekistan unexpectedly adopted the UN TIP Protocol (refs F and M), which was a welcome unilateral step

reflecting the government's increased confidence that its recent progress is consistent with international standards to address trafficking in persons. Uzbekistan also adopted the UN Convention Against Corruption in August (ref N), which should have a positive effect on the long-term development of a credible criminal justice system.

NORLAND